

## Stop 350 Adult Tour – Stove House Overview

The house you're in now is called the Stove House. It got that name because it used to be heated by a coal stove when it was first built in 1895. By the late 1800's orchid collecting was not only popular with botanists, but also wealthy amateurs who coveted their breath-taking flowers and intoxicating scents. New England winters weren't the best environment for trying to grow and keep delicate tropical orchids, which is why a stove was used to help maintain the temperature of their native habitat.

Today, this room houses our collection of epiphytes as well as some varieties of aquatic plants. Epiphytes are plants that use other plants for support, growing on their branches and trunks, but without deriving any nutrition from the trees on which they are perched. Many bromeliads and orchids are epiphytes, and you can see some epiphytic ferns in our fern house.

Many of our epiphytic orchids are displayed on pieces of tree bark or are potted in bark chips, simulating their natural habitat. You'll notice some of the orchids have very thick roots with a white coating on them. That is actually a spongy layer of dead cells that enables the roots to better absorb rainwater or water in the air, and keeps them from drying out. The roots also enable these plants to fiercely adhere to almost any surface. To find out more about the orchid's diversity, please press #338.